

Thomas Robertson House
3116-3118 M Street, N.W.
Georgetown
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-115

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

THOMAS ROBERTSON HOUSE

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Location: 3116-18 M Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.
(M Street formerly known as Bridge Street)

Present Owners: George H. Kelly et ux (one-third)
Thomas Liverman, et ux (one-third)
Millicent Chatel (one-third)

Present Occupant: The Pagoda Shop (Apartments on upper floors)

Present Use: Store and apartments

Statement of Significance: On original lot No. 54, of larger property known as "Peter Square", initially assembled by Robert Peter, first mayor of Georgetown. Built between 1812 and 1814 by Thomas Robertson, member of a prominent Georgetown family who was at one time Flour Inspector, a high post in Old Georgetown. House was bought in 1831 by Charles Burnett, one of the leading silversmiths of his time.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners. The building is located on part of Lot 11 (now 816) in Square 29 (now 1199) described as follows: Beginning on the south side of M Street, at a distance of 240'1" east of the intersection of the south line of said M Street with the east line of 32nd Street (Now Wisconsin Ave.), and running thence east with the south line of M Street 24'2" to the west line of Lot 12 in said square; thence with said line south 120' to an alley; thence west with the north line of said alley; 24'2"; and thence north 120' to beginning. At time of the cession of the District of Columbia, the land was owned by Robert Peter, who acquired it in 1760. (Georgetown Commissioners Minutes, 1751-1798 Library of Congress Manuscript Book, 1927).
- 1806 Robert Peter died, devising all his estate to his five sons, Thomas, Robert, David, George and James. Robert Peter's will is dated May 10, 1802 and was probated on November 29, 1806. (Will Book 1 Page 140)

- 1812 Under a Deed of Partition dated June 17, 1812, and recorded October 14, 1812 (Liber A.D., folio 319), Lot 11 was allotted "in severally" to his son, George Peter. HABS
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- 1814 There is no record of a deed conveying said property from George Peter to Thomas Robertson, but there is on record a mortgage from Daniel Kurtz to Thomas Robertson dated July 21, 1814, recorded November 21, 1814 (Liber A.H., folio 308), which included said property. A description of the mortgaged property follows: all the property which said Robertson possesses on Bridge St., in Georgetown, beginning at the end of 223 feet, 3 in. from the intersection of Bridge and Water Sts. (now Wisconsin Ave.), and running thence with Bridge St. Easterly 41 ft; thence Southerly 120 ft. to an alley; thence Westerly parallel with Bridge St., 41 ft.; thence to the beginning, and other property. "To secure grantee as endorser on notes amounting to \$5,000, also to secure any subsequent endorsement by said Kurtz from grantor, etc."
- 1823 Thomas Robertson died intestate prior to October 16, 1817. On August 30, 1823, the 3-story brick dwelling, built by Thomas Robertson, on the easternmost end of Lot 11 was sold to Philip E. Thomas for \$3,000. (Deed dated Feb. 14, 1824; recorded Feb. 26, 1824; Liber W.B. 10, folio 412. "Sold Aug. 30, 1823 to 2nd party, Convey the 3-story brick dwelling house of the late Thomas Robertson on Bridge St. being the easternmost and largest of the two 3-story brick houses built by the late Thomas Robertson and adjoining each other with the ground on which said largest house stands.")
- 1831 Sold by Philip E. Thomas to Charles A. Burnett. Deed dated May 21, 1831; recorded November 1, 1831 (Liber W.B. 38, folio 178)
- 1849 Charles Burnett died leaving no will, but under Letters of Administration dated May 26, 1849 (Administration Case No. 917, docket 3) the house and property were left to his heirs, Miss Eliza Ann Burnett. Miss Virginia Burnett, Mrs. Ellen Louisa Murdock and Mrs. Jane R. Levering.
- 1849 By deed dated October 2, 1849 and recorded April 5, 1850 (Liber J.A.S., folio 90) remaining three-fourths of said property, now referred to as a 3-story brick store and dwelling house, was deeded to Ellen Louisa Murdock, wife of William D. C. Murdock.

- 1855 By deed dated June 18, 1855 and recorded June 19, 1855 (Liber J.A.S. 99, folio 218) Samuel Shoemaker bought the house and grounds from Ellen Louisa Murdock for \$4,300. HABS DC GEO 74-
- 1891 Samuel Shoemaker died in 1891 and left the property to his wife Elizabeth, and their children, Sophia J., Anna R., and Samuel J. (Will dated June 23, 1856; Codicil dated May 6, 1884; probated December 13, 1891 - Will Book 30, page 406).
- 1892 On January 4, 1892 said property was deeded to Samuel J. Shoemaker by his mother, Elizabeth, and sisters, Sophia and Anna. (Liber 1644, folio 192, 194).
- 1959 The property apparently stayed in the Shoemaker family until November 3, 1959, when it was deeded by the Georgetown Redevelopment Corporation, trustee for the Elizabeth R. Shoemaker Home to Lynn L. Moore et ux. (Liber 11333, folio 512).
- 1962 Deeded by Lynn L. Moore et ux to George H. Kelly et ux on March 19, 1962 (Liber 11768, folio 453).
- 1963 Deeded by George H. Kelly et ux to Margaret E. Hartung on December 26, 1963 (Liber 12127, folio 364). On the same date, Margaret E. Hartung deeded the property to George H. Kelly et ux, (Liber 12127, folio 366), Thomas Liverman et ux, and Millicent Chatel, (Liber 12127, folio 364-74).
2. Date of erection: Built by Thomas Robertson (owner) between 1812 and 1813 (District of Columbia City of Georgetown assessment of real and personal property 1813-1818; National Archives record group 351, microcopy M-605, roll 9)
3. Architect: Not known.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: Permit in the District Building Permit Office, District Building, District of Columbia follows:
- 10/29/65 A60419 cut opening in party wall between 3114 and 3116 install class "A" fire door as/plan (cancelled?) \$150.00 Ray Lowstoter, 4940 Little Falls Road, Arlington.
6. Important old views: None known.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

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Washington directories provide the following tenant information:

1906-1915	Jacob Kaufman, clothier
1916-1919	Vacant
1922-1926	James Barr, clothing
1927	Dominic Musacchio, beauty parlor
1928-1929	Washington Tire Store
1930	Spilman's Inc.
1931	Vacant
1933-1938	Jacob Tebelett, men's furnishings
1940	Anna Rosenberg, shoes
1941	Bernard Blum, leather goods
1943	Waldron Florist
1948	Sid Silverman, pawnbrokers
1954	J. A. Lombardo, shoe repair
1956-1962	Pottery Fair
1964-1966	Pagoda Shop

Prepared by Dr. James Philip Noffsinger
Architect
National Park Service
August 19, 1966 et seq.

Source material contributed by
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Washington, D. C.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An early nineteenth-century commercial and residential structure, the Thomas Robertson House has undergone little exterior alteration above the first floor except for the dormers. The dignified and well-proportioned facade is a simple but characteristic example of the Federal period.
2. Condition of fabric: Good; brick appears to be in very good condition.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 24' (four bays) x approximately 85' (including additions); three-and-one-half stories in height.

2. Foundations: Brick to grade on exterior, stone visible in basement.
3. Wall construction: Red Flemish bond brick has been painted cream on (north) facade. South elevation has been resurfaced in common bond with headers every four courses. East elevation appears to be of common bond with header courses at undetermined intervals.
4. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys over east gable wall rise high above roof. Chimneys measure 1'-8" x 2'-8" (approximately); two-course projecting brick cap at top.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Single-paned wooden shop door and hall door east of shop front are comparatively modern. Hall door is set under transom within deep wooden reveal.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Plate-glass shop windows are relatively new. Second and third-floor windows have splayed voussoir-and-keystone-patterned solid stone lintels and stone sills. Wooden double-hung second-floor sash are nine-over-six-light; third-floor and all rear sash are six-over-six-light. One pair of shutters remains on west bay of third-floor front.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: East-west gable is covered with standing-seamed tin defined on east by brick coping. Ell roof slopes from north to south.
 - b. Framing: (Apparently) wood.
 - c. Cornice, eaves: Brick dentil course is only decorative element at eaves. Metal gutter and downspout may date from early nineteenth century.
 - d. Dormers: Two front dormers (on axis with south dormers) retain original dimensions but have been refaced and sheeted with tin. Present detailing appears to date from last quarter of nineteenth century. Six-paned casements and glazed lunettes are not original.
- C. Technical Description of Interiors: First-floor commercial space has cast-iron columnar supports. Four-bay second and third floors have side-hall plan with stairs behind westernmost bay.

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D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Thomas Robertson House faces north onto M Street, N.W. between 31st Street and Wisconsin Avenue in a block of commercially successful if not architecturally significant buildings, one-half block north of the C & O Canal. More restrained in design than some of its neighbors, it retains much of its original quiet dignity.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: Two brick ells extending southward along the west property line have been added at a later date.
4. Walks: Fronts on public sidewalk to the north.
5. Landscaping: None.

Prepared by Thomas R. Martinson
Student Assistant Architect
National Park Service
September 1, 1966